United Nations A/C.2/53/3

General Assembly

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Fifty-third session
Second Committee
Agenda item 93 (e)
Sustainable development and international economic cooperation: Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s

Letter dated 30 September 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Declaration adopted by the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries at their Eighth Annual Meeting, held at United Nations Headquarters on 28 September 1998 (see annex).

I would like to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 93 (e).

(*Signed*) Anwarul Karim **Chowdhury**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Bangladesh to the United Nations and
Coordinator of Least Developed
Countries in New York

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Annex

Declaration of the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries at their Eighth Annual Meeting, held at United Nations Headquarters on 28 September 1998

We, the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries, having met at the United Nations headquarters during the 53rd session of the General Assembly, on 28 September 1998 pursuant to the decision of the Dhaka Declaration of February 1990,

Recalling the Ministerial Declaration adopted on 30 September 1997 during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly,

Having assessed progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action, solemnly declare the following:

1. We welcome the decision of the 52nd session of the United Nations General Assembly to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in the year 2001. The mandate of the conference, as outlined in the resolution 52/187 of 18 December 1997 is both topical and timely. We express out satisfaction for this decision in response to our call made at the Seventh LDCs Ministerial Meeting. We most sincerely believe that the Conference will provide a historic rallying point for the LDCs and their development partners to revitalize their partnership to arrest and reverse the continued marginalization of LDCs and promote their development and progressive integration into the world economy within a framework of genuine partnership and shared responsibility.

2. An important task before the Conference would be to review implementation of international support measures during the 1990s, particularly in the areas of Official Development Assistance (ODA), debt, investment and trade. The lack of progress in the implementation of the provisions of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s with regard to international support to LDCs is a matter of deep concern. Far from providing LDCs with substantially increased external financial resources, as agreed under the Programme of Action and meeting the agreed targets of ODA, the donor assistance has fallen to historically low levels in recent years. Only a handful of donor countries have continued to meet or exceed ODA targets, who deserve our appreciation. Availability of adequate external financial resources is critical to resume and sustain growth and development in LDCs. We call upon all development partners to move expeditiously to substantially increase the level of financial assistance to LDCs with a view to meeting their commitments under the Programme of Action.

3. The external debt situation of LDCs continues to be grave. The debt relief measures undertaken so far have proved to be grossly inadequate. Without a decisive reduction in debt stock and debt service obligations, the growth prospects of LDCs will continue to be bleak. We appeal to all creditor countries to cancel all outstanding debt owed by LDCs. We consider the HIPC initiative by the World Bank and the IMF as a step in the right direction. However, the eligibility criteria must be significantly eased to make the scheme more flexible and inclusive. While a majority of LDCs are included under the HIPC initiative, debt relief requirements of other LDCs should also be promptly and adequately met.

4. The marginalization of LDCs in world trade has accentuated in recent years. Strengthening LDCs' capacity to participate in the multilateral trading system should be an important part of international efforts to integrate LDCs into the world economy. Expeditious accession of LDCs that are not members of WTO to that organization should be an integral part of these efforts. We call for full and effective implementation of the special and differential measures in favour of LDCs as contained in multilateral trade agreements. We stress that in implementing existing multilateral trade agreements and in future negotiations, the international community must ensure that the obligations placed on LDCs are consistent with their level of development and capacity to carry out such obligations. We further stress that significant scope exists in improving market access conditions for LDCs, including through removal of tariff peaks and tariff escalation.

5. We welcome the call in the first-ever Ministerial Communiqué adopted at the high-level segment of the 1998 substantive session of the ECOSOC, for working together to enhance market access of exports from the LDCs and to support their efforts at capacity-building. We also welcome the recognition that the full implementation of the Plan of Action for the LDCs required further progress towards duty-free imports from them. We call upon all development and trading partners to effectively follow-up the results of the High-level Meeting on Trade Development of LDCs, held under the auspices of WTO in October 1997 with a view to enhancing market access for exports of LDCs and strengthening their export supply capacity. We hope that implementation of UNCTAD's integrated country programmes will result in strengthening supply capacity for exportable goods and services of LDCs and that the programmes could be expanded to other countries. We call upon the development partners and other countries in a position to do so to contribute generously to the UNCTAD Trust Fund for providing start-up costs for these programmes.

6. We underscore that the progress in economic transformation made by LDCs in recent years have been primarily due to the wide-ranging reforms undertaken by our countries under most difficult domestic and external conditions. We reaffirm our commitment to pursue appropriate macro-economic policies to promote growth and

development. We will continue to make efforts to create conditions for improved domestic and foreign investment and the diversification of our exports. We reiterate our call upon the development partners to put in place policies and measures that would facilitate more inward movement of resources for development, including FDI to LDCs and the promotion of transfer of technology in support of our national actions.

7. We are deeply concerned by the financial crises faced by a number of countries and regions of the world. These have the potential of greatly undermining LDCs' growth and development. Declining commodity prices is a clear indication of the dangers faced by our countries in the current world economic context. We invite the development partners to urgently put in place safety-net measures to shield our fragile economies and vulnerable populations against the impact of these financial crises. The views and interests of the Least Developed Countries should be fully and adequately reflected in discussion and negotiations on global financial issues. LDCs must be able to participate in this process.

8. We are also deeply concerned at the increase in level of extreme poverty in the least developed countries and an increase in absolute number of people living in poverty, despite our effort at its eradication. The feminization of poverty is particularly disturbing. We stress that the international community and the UN should significantly enhance its support to the LDCs from its present level. In this context, we welcome the General Assembly's adoption of resolution on the role of microcredit in the eradication of poverty. We recognize that microcredit programmes are a key strategy in promoting self-employment, income generation, eradication of poverty and empowerment of people, particularly of women. We call on the UN system to support establishment of new and strengthening of existing micro-lending institutions, so that credit for self-employment may be made available to greater number of people living in poverty.

9. We are concerned by the growing number of humanitarian and natural disasters and environmental emergencies which often strike countries that lack the resources to cope with them adequately. We stress that humanitarian and natural disaster reduction forms an integral part of sustainable development plans of vulnerable countries and communities. International cooperation to address emergency situations and strengthen the response capacity of affected countries is of great importance. We call on the intergovernmental non-governmental organizations working impartially and with strictly humanitarian motives to continue to make significant contribution for supplementing national efforts in tackling humanitarian emergencies.

10. We reiterate the need for a holistic approach for advancement of women, including achievement of their empowerment and economic independence. We are convinced that health and education programmes need to concentrate more on women and the girl child. We express deep concern about the situation of children in difficult

circumstances. We are determined to take urgent and appropriate measures to protect them and improve their rehabilitation and living conditions. We stress the requirement of adequate resources to meet these undertakings.

11. We note that the process of globalization and liberalization poses serious risk and challenges to the Least Developed Countries, specially the smallest amongst them, and emphasize the importance of further improvements in the existing LDC criteria to make it reflective of structural weakness, impediments to development, and constraints to integration into the world economy. In this regard we call for the early development of vulnerability index for small islands developing States, as called for by the General Assembly resolution 51/183 of 16 December 1996. We are of the view that the question of graduation of any member state should be deferred until such an index is developed by the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) and until the report requested from UNCTAD on practical impact of the measures in favour of least developed countries in the various international agreements and programmes is completed.

12. We emphasize the crucial importance of adequate preparations for the Third UN Conference on the LDCs. The preparatory activities should take into account the development priorities articulated by LDCs themselves. The work of the Conference should be based on serious substantive and deliberative work. It should draw on national experiences of LDCs, as well as on the lessons learned from the implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s and other major global conferences. The General Assembly designated UNCTAD as the focal point for the preparations of the Conference, and we call upon UNCTAD to launch a preparatory process as early as possible.

13. We urge the development partners, intergovernmental and multilateral institutions and others concerned to take appropriate steps to ensure that adequate preparations are made for the Conference, to participate effectively in the preparatory process, and to support LDCs in their own preparations. We call upon UNCTAD, UNDP and the World Bank to collaborate in integrating the outcomes of the Round Tables and Aid Group/Consultative Group meetings into the substantive preparatory work of the Conference. We also welcome the decision of the General Assembly that the future issues of the Least Developed Countries Annual Report would make substantive contribution to the Conference and its preparations.

14. Effective participation of LDCs in the Third UN Conference on LDCs is of utmost importance. We call upon the Secretary-General of the United Nations to ensure appropriate support and substantive input in the preparatory process of the conference, and for making proposals for resources, for this purpose for the consideration of the General Assembly, so as to defray the cost of participation of at least two representatives from each LDC in the preparatory meetings and the Conference itself.

We also request the Secretary-General, with the assistance of concerned organizations and bodies of the United Nations, to take necessary measures to initiate public information efforts and other actions to enhance public awareness on issues before the Conference.

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General Assembly

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Fifty-third session
Second Committee
Agenda items 91 and 93
Macroeconomic policy questions
Sustainable development and international economic cooperation

Letter dated 8 October 1998 from the representatives of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the Baku Declaration adopted at the International Conference on Restoration of the Historic Silk Route, held at Baku, on 7 and 8 September 1998 (see annex).

We should be grateful if you have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 91 and 93.

(*Signed*) Eldar **Kouliev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Vladimir **Sotirov**
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Peter **Chkheidze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Akmaral **Arystanbekova**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Zamira **Eshmambetova**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Kyrgyz Republic to the United Nations

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(*Signed*) Ion **Botnaru**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Jargalsaikhany **Enkhsaikhan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Eugeniusz **Wyzner**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Ion **Gorita**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Rashid **Alimov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Volkan **Vural**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Turkey to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Alisher **Vohidov**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations

Annex

[Original: English and Russian]

Baku Declaration, adopted at Baku on 8 September 1998

The heads of State and Government and heads of delegation participating in the International Conference on Restoration of the Historic Silk Route, hereinafter referred to as "the Parties",

Expressing their aspiration for fruitful and mutually beneficial economic and trade cooperation,

Acknowledging the importance of the development of interlinked national and regional transport infrastructures for the expansion of cooperation in the regions of Europe, the Black Sea, the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Asia,

Stressing their common interest in the development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor, including the transport routes of the Black Sea region, on the basis of the revival of the ancient transport route of human civilization, the Great Silk Route,

Noting the importance of the principles and objectives of the Brussels Declaration of 7 May 1993 as well as adherence to the generally recognized principles and norms of international law,

Emphasizing the importance of the implementation of the TRASECA programme to provide sustainable access to trans-European and trans-Asiatic transport networks for the landlocked countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia,

Noting the positive role of regional and subregional interaction and cooperation in establishing international peace and security, and the growth of confidence and stability,

Declare as follows:

1. The Parties support the initiatives and efforts undertaken in the interests of developing the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor and express their satisfaction with the implementation process of the main objectives of the Brussels Declaration.

2. Noting the contribution of the European Union made to the implementation of the TRASECA programme, the Parties welcome the European Union's resolution to take further coordinated actions to promote the above-mentioned programme and to develop the Europe-Caucasus-Asia corridor.

3. The Parties emphasize in particular the importance of safeguarding peace, security, stability and confidence, the settlement of regional conflicts on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the principles and decisions of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for the successful implementation of projects within the framework of the TRASECA programme and the sustainable functioning of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor.

4. The Parties underline the significance of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor in the context of international cooperation for the development of the countries of the Caspian Sea and Central Asia region and express their readiness to provide to those countries free access to seaports. Noting the particular role and position of the region in the architecture of Eurasian integration being formed, the Parties express their support for the efforts of the countries of the region directed towards closer integration with international trade and transport systems and for the expansion of cooperation in the field of rehabilitation

and optimization of the existing transport infrastructures for transporting goods, including energy to world markets, and the initiation of and assistance in the establishment of new ones that are environmentally secure and cost-effective.

5. The Parties note with satisfaction that growing interest in the revival of the Great Silk Route, in particular through the implementation of the TRASECA programme, and invite all interested States to pool their material and human resources to encourage mutually beneficial cooperation for the achievement of that objective.

6. The Parties express their intention to pursue cooperation in developing the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor with the United Nations economic commissions for Europe and for Asia and the Pacific, other relevant agencies of the United Nations system, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation organization, the Economic Cooperation Organization and other international organizations and financial institutions.

7. The Parties agree that strengthening the institutional and legal framework of cooperation for developing the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor will promote the increased efficiency of interaction between the participating States. In this respect the Parties welcome the signing of the Basic Multilateral Agreement on International Transport for Development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia Corridor (the Basic Agreement) as an important institutional mechanism to help develop and regulate the international transport of goods and passengers, including transport in transit, coordination and harmonization of transport policies and legal frameworks in the field of transport. The Parties also express the hope that the setting up of an Intergovernmental Commission and its Permanent Secretariat as well as the setting up of permanent representations of the Permanent Secretariat in each of the participating States in the Basic Agreement will promote the efficient implementation of the provisions of the Basic Agreement.

8. The Parties note the importance of the coordinating mechanisms for participation in the implementation of the TRASECA programme established at the national level as well as within the framework of the European Union.

9. The Parties confirm their intention to use the dynamics and potential of private entrepreneurship to increase the effectiveness of cooperation, initiation and implementation of investment projects meeting the objectives of development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor.

10. The Parties express their satisfaction with the results of the Baku International Conference on Restoration of the Historic Silk Route as an important milestone in the institutional strengthening and enhancement of cooperation for the further development of the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor in the interests of the economic progress of the participating States.

11. The Parties highly appreciate the initiative of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E. Mr. Heydar Aliyev, and the President of Georgia, H.E. Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, as well as the support of the European Union for the idea of holding an International Conference on Restoration of the Historic Silk Route.

12. The Parties express their appreciation to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan for hosting in Baku this International Conference and for the excellent organizational arrangements, and for the cordiality and hospitality extended to them by the Government and people of Azerbaijan.

Republic of Armenia

Republic of Azerbaijan

Republic of Bulgaria

Georgia

Republic of Kazakhstan

Kyrgyz Republic

Republic of Moldova

Mongolia

Republic of Poland

Romania

Republic of Tajikistan

Republic of Turkey

Ukraine

Republic of Uzbekistan

United Nations A/C.2/53/5

General Assembly

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29 October 1998

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Fifty-third session
Second Committee

Letter dated 26 October 1998 from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee to the Chairman of the Second Committee

I have the honour to inform you that, at its 12th meeting, on 23 October 1998, the Fifth Committee, in the context of its consideration of agenda item 114, entitled "Programme planning", decided to request me to address a letter to the Chairmen of the concerned Main Committees of the General Assembly, seeking their views on the relevant proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998–2001.

Attention is drawn, in particular, to paragraph 40 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the work of its thirty-eighth session (A/53/16), by which the Committee had recommended that the Economic and Social Council and the competent Main Committees of the General Assembly stress in particular the consideration of the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan that had not been submitted to the attention of sectoral and regional bodies. The proposed revisions refer to the following programmes: programme 18 (Economic and social development in Western Asia), programme 20 (Humanitarian assistance) and programme 28 (Economic and social affairs).

It would be appreciated if the views of your Committee on the relevant proposed revisions could be communicated to the Fifth Committee by Friday, 6 November 1998.

(Signed) Movses **Abelian**
Chairman
Fifth Committee of the General Assembly

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